

Appln No. 10/040,981

Amdt date December 15, 2004

Reply to Office action of September 20, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

As a preliminary matter, Applicants note that the Examiner has not yet acknowledged consideration of the references cited in the Information Disclosure Statement submitted on May 3, 2004. Accordingly, Applicants request that the Examiner acknowledge consideration of these references by returning to Applicants a signed and initialed copy of the form PTO-1449 with the next communication.

Claims 1-6, 8-17 and 19 now remain pending in this application. Applicants have canceled claims 7 and 18, and have amended claims 1, 6, 8, 9 and 19. Applicants have also amended claim 14 solely to correct a minor, inadvertent typographical error, without affecting the scope of that claim. The amendments find full support in the original specification, claims and drawings. No new matter is presented. In view of the above amendments and following remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that each of pending claims 1-6, 8-17 and 19, as amended, are in condition for allowance. Applicants, therefore, respectfully request a timely indication of allowance.

In the Office action dated September 20, 2004, the Examiner allowed claim 11. Applicants have not amended claim 11, and the claim therefore remains allowable.

The Examiner also objected to claims 6-9 and 17-19 as being dependent on rejected base claims, but indicated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of claim 7 and have canceled claim 7. Applicants have also amended

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claim 6 to include all the limitations of claims 1 and 5, and have amended claim 9 to depend from claim 1, rather than canceled claim 7. In addition, Applicants have canceled claim 18 and amended claim 19 to depend from claim 12, rather than canceled claim 18.

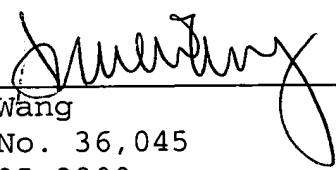
The Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 10 and 12-16 under either 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) or 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as either anticipated by Bowden, et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,611,777), or as unpatentable over Bowden in view of Webster, Jr. (U.S. Patent No. 6,198,974). However, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to include the limitations of allowable claim 7. Accordingly, amended independent claim 1, as well as all claims dependent therefrom, including claims 2-5, 10 and 12-16, are allowable.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that all of pending claims 1-6, 8-17 and 19 are in condition for allowance. Applicants therefore respectfully request a timely indication of allowance. If there are any remaining issues that can be addressed by telephone, Applicants invite the Examiner to contact the undersigned at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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626/795-9900

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